

a note to Henry Jenkins, 1995

Dear Henry Jenkins,

John Hess sent me a copy of something you posted, I guess on H-Net. I feel like I'm walking in on a conversation, but I had something to add. So, you or H-net can repost this.

I believe you have a factual error in that Paddy Waddell (sic, Whannel) and Raymond Williams did not direct the Birmingham Centre. Richard Hoggart founded it and ran it until Stuart Hall took over in the early 70s. I don't know how you got the idea that Richard Dyer wasn't part of the Centre. In the first issue of Working Papers in Cultural Studies (1971) he provided an article on entertainer Tom Jones (an early version of his work on entertainment as a concept) and a translation of the French intro to Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy*.

I find your map of the Cultural Studies terrain peculiar compared to my experience. And the account of its origins curious. (But perhaps you mean Cultural Studies, a registered trademark of Routledge and the U of Minnesota Press.) I met Hoggart in the late 60s when he came to Indiana Univ. to work with seminars in American Studies and Victorian Studies on Robert Owen's early Utopian society in Indiana near Terre Haute. A number of us there were steadily reading the mimeographed papers that came out of the Birmingham Centre that preceeded and then ran continuously with Working Papers.

Your version makes it seem like no one ever thought of cultural studies in the US until Fisk and Grossberg arrived on the scene in the mid 80s. This is probably your experience, but believe me it is not accurate to the history of many of us graybeards. The idea of studying class as part of culture certainly had a strong component in the radical wing of US History studies in the late 60s--Radical America ran much material of this kind, the U of Wisconsin was a hotbed for it, and Paul Buhle both in editing Radical America, and later Cultural Correspondance tried to do justice to it. Some of us had even read E.P. Thompson's history of the English Working class as well as Williams and Hoggart and Hall & Whannel. My friend and mentor in grad school, Martha Vicinus, was writing her history of British 19th century working class literature at the time, and many of us at Indiana were thinking in these terms such as Charlie Eckert. Eckert's piece on Marked Woman (in Nichols, Movies

and Methods) and my 1974 Jump Cut piece on Evel Knievel and Junior Johnson (reprinted in Peter Steven, Jump Cut) were attempts to apply class analysis to popular films in a continuation of cultural studies concerns.

Whannel was at the Northwestern Radio/TV/Film department throughout the 70s and brought everyone there news about cultural studies in the U.K. (as well as Screen, etc.) He helped train, among others, Ellen Seiter and Jane Gaines. He even coauthored (with my still-colleague Dana Hodgdon) a short book, The Book of Darts, which is a small gem of cultural studies on darts from English pubs to US taverns.

I think that a longer view of the field is necessarily a better view since it helps prevent re-inventing the wheel. Cultural analysis of issues of race is not new,...quite the contrary. Take a look at Charles Keil's Urban Blues for an example of a work from the 60s Chicago School of sociology which addresses about five times more questions than Fiske's recent work on race.

may 21, 95